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Current Opinion

The Passing of Semi-Hypnotic Sermons

In the *American Journal of Religious Sociology and Education* for August Professor Klein, of the State Normal School, Duluth, Minn., records the results of the questionnaire on the effect of a sermon on a congregation. Of thirty answers 50 per cent. indicate an emotional response. Altogether the replies indicate that the sermon has lost much of its stimulating power because of the lessened authority of the clergy. This lessened authority is the basis of what Professor Klein calls the suggestive and semi-hypnotic power of the sermon. While this may be an interesting conclusion, the really serious matter in the answers given by the investigation is the fact that sermons do not get hold of the real life of the people. With the working-men on the one side and the cultured classes on the other, are we not in danger of making our preaching simply an appeal to religious persons whose income runs from \$600 to \$3,000 a year? The real preacher will have a message for other people than these, and he will not need to rely on semi-hypnotism either. To our mind our psychological friends are rather overworking adolescence and hypnotism in religion.

The Religious Individualism of a Socialist

In a recent address delivered by a prominent socialist in Chicago occur these words:

I have no church connections, and because I have no church connections, it might be inferred that I have no religious convictions. Yet the differences in religious opinion between myself and my friends of the churches are probably neither so numerous nor so radical as might be imagined. In the final analysis, our disputes would hinge, I think, chiefly upon questions of ecclesiasticism. For I reject what my friends of the churches are pleased to call their spiritual authorities, and rest my religious faith upon what I am pleased to call my own perceptions and my own reason.

These words do not refer to socialism, but rather to the general religious attitude of the speaker. They deserve careful attention on the part of ministers, because they represent an attitude of mind which is by no means uncommon. In fact, one of the large problems that face organized Christianity today is the utilization of religious forces which exist outside of the church. It will not do to say that a failure to join the church is *prima*

facie evidence of badness. There are few people nowadays who would hold such a view as that. In fact, in some cases men are undoubtedly kept from joining the church by excessive honesty. They do not want to be understood to profess more than they actually believe or can live. At the same time, religious men and women ought to be in the churches. Standing as individuals, their influence is dissipated. Joining with an organization, they can aid interests to which they really are devoted. As most of us are coming to see, a church is not intended to be a theological class where everybody believes exactly alike, but an organization in which the faith and good impulses of the individual may be strengthened and enlarged by co-operation. We join the church, not to be saved, but to save.

The Origin of the Sign of the Fish

Professor Pischel, the famous Sanskrit scholar, prints a very learned paper in the *Proceedings of the Royal Prussian Academy of Sciences* at Berlin, philosophical-historical section, 1905, pp. 506-32, in which he maintains that the fish as a symbol of Christ, the Savior, had its origin in India. The fish which saved Manu, the progenitor of the human race, is considered the god Brahman, or mostly as Vishnu. From the worshipers of Vishnu the symbol was adopted by the Buddhists, who communicated it to the Christians in Turkestan, whence it spread to all the world of Christendom. The fish as a symbol of good luck can be traced in India as far back as the fifth century B. C. But do likenesses always imply genealogical descent?